

STATEMENT FOR WE THE PEOPLE PRESS CONFERENCE

07/17/01

My office has received hundreds of phone calls, faxes, emails, and letters supporting Mr. Schulz and Mr. Croteau. I think they are sincere in their beliefs, even though I strongly disagree with their hunger strike. I believe we can work with the IRS, the administration, and Congress to get answers to their questions, and I know that Congressman Bartlett and I are willing to assist them in their efforts. However, it is imperative that these gentleman end their fast immediately. No cause is served by their needless suffering.

The validity of their claims about the tax laws and the 16th Amendment is uncertain. Yet I support Mr. Schulz's right to petition his government, to have his petition heard and taken seriously. The IRS should meet with him, and respond formally to his questions. His First Amendment petition should not be dismissed simply because his viewpoint is not shared by IRS officials. Indeed, the right to a formal response is inherent in the constitutional right to petition the government.

The attention generated by Mr Schulz and his organization shows that many Americans are fed up with the tax system. It's an outrage that most tax professionals, much less typical taxpayers, cannot understand the incredibly complex tax code. It's an outrage that so many have had their lives destroyed by the IRS. One thing is clear: The Founding Fathers never intended a nation where citizens pay nearly half of everything they earn to government. Congress needs to address the tax mess legislatively, by drastically simplifying and drastically reducing taxes. My own legislation would repeal the 16th Amendment and put an end to individual income taxes.

Mr. Schulz and thousands of other Americans have very strong feelings about our tax system, and it needs to be fixed. Their voices should not be ignored. Mr. Schulz and his supporters can make their voices heard at the ballot box, by electing candidates who sincerely believe in changing the tax system.